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The Colonies

By Jane Runyon

Have you ever tasted flour? By itself, it doesn't have much taste, does it? How about salt? You wouldn't want to eat too much of it by itself. What about raw egg, vanilla, sugar, cooking oil, baking soda? None of these would taste very good as a snack. But what if you mixed all of these ingredients together and then put them in the oven to bake? In 30-40 minutes, you would have a delicious cake that you would find very pleasant to eat. The original thirteen colonies were much the same as the ingredients in our cake. Settling here were people of many different parts of Europe and Africa who brought their cultures with them to form a new country. All of these traditions and cultures mixed together to create a country different from any other country in the world, a country delicious to the throngs which suffered hardship to reach the shores of this new land.

Many of the new colonists had come to this new world to escape religious oppression. Many were poor and thought that they could find wealth in a new world. Some were trying to start new lives after being shut up in prisons for crimes and debts. All of these new inhabitants came to find a home where they could decide for themselves and their families the best way to live. Here there would be no king telling them what to believe and what to do. Many of the new colonists had come from England and still considered themselves to be Englishmen. On the other hand, more and more of the new residents began to call themselves Americans and wanted to govern themselves as a separate country.

Because of the great mixture of people and cultures, some people in England began to refer to the colonists as mongrels. A mongrel is most often defined as a dog of several different breeds mixed together, not a pure breed. They thought that this would be an insult to the colonists, but instead, the colonists wore the title as a symbol of their fierceness.

England started to fear this independent feeling as a sign of resistance to their rule. King George III and his Parliament decided to "teach these upstarts a lesson" by imposing taxes on the colonies to help pay for their wars in Europe. The colonists had no representatives in Parliament, so they had no voice protecting their rights. The king imposed taxes whenever and for whatever he wanted. The colonists began to feel that they had to bear "taxation without representation."

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Questions

_____ 1. The purpose of this piece is:

- A. to demonstrate a new concept
- B. to inform
- C. to entertain
- D. to persuade

2. True or False? The early colonists all came from the same country.

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_____ 3. The word mongrels in this story refers to:

- A. a group of animals in a pen
- B. people who collect taxes
- C. one-sided geometric figures
- D. people of mixed backgrounds

4. What caused the king to levy taxes on the colonists?

5. What conclusion can you draw from the facts in this piece?

6. An analogy is a kind of comparison. In this article an analogy compares the mixture of culture and traditions in the new colonies to what?

7. Who was the leader of England at this time?

8. What term was used to describe the English practice of taxing the people of the colonies?



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